

incontournable pour la connaissance de l'émergence de la discipline infirmière au Québec.

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Edward J. Monahan. *Collective Autonomy: A History of the Council of Ontario Universities, 1962-2000*. Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2004. Pp. 252.

In *Collective Autonomy*, Edward Monahan presents his “insider’s” account of the history of the Council of Ontario Universities (COU) and its predecessor body, the Council of Presidents of the Universities of Ontario (CPUO). It is a history that Dr. Monahan is well qualified to write – he has been active in various facets of university administration for almost the entirety of the period he deals with, working with the CAUT, then serving as President of Laurentian University, and finally as the Executive Director of the COU from 1977 to 1991.

The mention of an “insider” account of the COU, the consultative body of the Universities of Ontario for the last forty years, causes one to reflect on what an “outsider” account of the COU might look like. Historians of higher education in Canada would be hard-pressed to find much detailed study of the group, except for some references in Paul Axelrod’s *Scholars and Dollars*, which was published in 1982. Although vital in the history of the debates on the development of the Ontario University, the COU has largely been overlooked. Dr. Monahan’s effort is overdue.

Monahan describes the organization as a critical part of the framework of university-government relations, and a vital buffer between university autonomy and public accountability. Universities have been the beneficiary of large amounts of taxpayer money since the 1960s, and the COU, with its motto of “collective autonomy,” has attempted to maximize university independence in a climate where questions are asked as to how this money is being spent.

The COU was also part of a complicated governing mechanism for Ontario universities. Between it and the various ministries responsible for the system has been another ill-studied body, the Committee of University Affairs (CUA), founded in 1964 and changed into the Ontario Council on University Affairs (OCUA) in 1974. This intermediary body, until its demise in 1996, was responsible for recommending policy to a ministry (and a cabinet) that was often distracted by other issues in government. Much of Monahan's book is the story of the relationship between the COU and these buffer bodies, which collectively were struggling towards system planning in the Ontario university context.

However, the road never runs smooth. Neither COU nor OCUA over the period in question made many strides towards efficient planning for an Ontario university system. The stumbling block in most cases appears to have been money – which began to dry up in the university system at the beginning of the 1970s. Although COU was effective in planning some aspects when money was flowing in the 1960s, this early success could not be sustained. And the COU proved remarkably inept at dealing with the consequences of financial restraint. When OCUA declared that the system had “excess capacity” in 1978, and asked for direct evidence of program quality, the COU could not react effectively.

The reason for this is not hard to find. Monahan declares that his account “takes the view that Ontario does have a university system (without any quotation marks)” (p. 6). This reviewer must strongly disagree. The whole idea of a “university system” in Ontario is a myth. There never was a system, there was only a disparate group of institutions with different histories, vastly different sizes and shapes, each founded in its own political context. To imagine that common ground could be found between behemoths such as the University of Toronto and small fry such as Laurentian or Trent is to imagine a diplomatic structure that has never been effective, anywhere. Monahan rightly states, in reference to the 1980s, that “the earlier decision of government to establish all Ontario universities as equal in terms of their degree-granting rights had become a major deterrent in the efforts of OCUA to introduce a more differentiated system” (p. 120). By the same token, COU could not manage to get its various members to agree that differentiation should occur – that each university should not be trying to do everything. This should not come as a

surprise, however, to anyone who has looked at how universities have developed in Ontario. The promise of a university in a community has meant a fully developed institution, not a collection of bits of education which might be financially more sustainable. If you start at the outset with the declaration, “there never was the intention to create a university system in Ontario” and instead see the picture as one of a collection of essentially unrelated publicly funded schools, then it is easy to see that the COU could never rationally plan that which was never intended to be planned rationally.

When this is understood, some of the basic ineptitude of the COU can be understood. It explains how the organization could call for report after report on the university system: the Spinks report on graduate studies in 1966, the Lapp report on engineering in 1971, the Commission on Post-Secondary Education in 1972 – and not be prepared to accept any of the findings of the reports. Each report called for the development of a structure for overall planning of the system, and each one was rejected. The same trend would hold in the 1980s with the Fisher and Bovey reports, although neither was directly requested by COU. The inability of the COU to develop strong ties with the various student federations or with the Ontario Council of University Faculty Associations (OCUFA) can be similarly explained – this would have required some system-wide agreement on standards of Ontario universities, their governance, and their employee relations. Individual universities were loathe to allow such intrusions on their public domain.

To be fair, the COU eventually came to understand that it could not be a force in system planning, and by the end of the 1980s it had moved into the realm of lobbying and advocacy, with the central aim being the return of significant public funding to the universities. Here the COU continued to have problems, because the smaller and larger universities each had their own agendas, and these were often contradictory. The COU was also lobbying in a province where other priorities, such as public health and lower levels of education, received far more public attention. Finally by the 1990s a series of policy decisions by the provincial government, deliberate and accidental, led to the end of a public system. Higher education became a private, not a public, good; government funds were increasingly targeted to entrepreneurial activities and research priorities; and universities were forced to differentiate on a self-

regulating, voluntary framework – the only such framework that could ever succeed. Monahan's account of these years seem increasingly bitter in tone, as he describes how the COU could only react to these developments, having lost any ability to shape the general future of university education in Ontario.

This, then, is largely Monahan's account of the COU – a body struggling to plan for a system that didn't exist in order to prevent someone else from doing so in a way that would interfere with university autonomy, a sacrosanct concept. Monahan, in his excellent conclusion, would put it somewhat differently, stating that "the principal purpose [of COU] was to serve the people of the province through the expansion of the universities to meet the growing demand for higher education among the young people of the province, while at the same time preserving the autonomy of their institutions" (p. 199). It amounts to the same thing. Along the way, the COU did have some constructive successes. It was able to put a system of planning for graduate studies in place from the late 1960s until 1981. If this did not lead to any rationalization of graduate development, it most likely prevented the creation of extraneous weak programs, especially in the smaller universities. COU also created the Ontario University Applications Centre, a vital plank in reducing the chaos of enrolment predictions, and later a major cash cow for the operating support of the Council. COU initiatives also assisted in the creation of an inter-library loan procedure in Ontario, for which many scholars can be grateful.

Dr. Monahan should be congratulated for telling the story straight, for not attempting to engage in hagiography or mystification in placing the COU in the framework of the development of higher education in Ontario. Even when dealing with the possible future of the organization, he says "despite its present weaknesses, with strong leadership council may succeed in meeting and overcoming these [current] formidable challenges" (p. 212). The cautionary tone is admirable. *Collective Autonomy* belongs on the bookshelf of any serious scholar of Canadian higher education, between Axelrod's *Scholars and Dollars* and Gwendoline Pilkington's 1980 book on the Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada, *Speaking with One Voice*.

In terms of design, however, Wilfrid Laurier University Press can be called to account. The indexing of the book is sadly deficient. If someone did not know that the Lapp report dealt with engineering, for example, they would not be able to find a

heading on “engineering” to guide them. Similarly, there is no entry under “inter-library loan” or for any of the individual universities mentioned in the account. For the scholar, this poses no problem, but if the press intended the book to actually reach a general popular audience, it could have provided better landmarks in the index. The Select Bibliography also is rather quirky, containing a few sources that have no bearing on the text, and omitting others. And the footnoting, especially in the early chapters, is somewhat sparse. Experts will know where to go to find the supporting material, but the general reader will be stumped. All of these changes would have added only about a dozen pages to the text, and greatly increased its value to the non-specialist.

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Hélène Sabourin. *À l'école de P.-J.-O. Chauveau. Éducation et culture au XIX^e siècle.* Montréal, Leméac, 2003. 230 p.

À l'école de P.-J.-O. Chauveau est un ouvrage qui met l'emphasis sur l'homme qui se cache derrière celui qui occupe le poste de surintendant puis de ministre de l'Instruction publique entre 1855 et 1873. Hélène Sabourin ne s'intéresse pas tant au politicien, essayiste, journaliste qu'à l'être passionné par le savoir et les livres. Ses convictions font de lui un personnage d'envergure, promoteur d'éducation et de culture, comme l'indique le sous-titre. Lorsque le hasard de la politique le place à la direction du département de l'Instruction publique (DIP), il s'empresse de communiquer sa passion à toutes les couches de la société. La double devise du *Journal de l'instruction publique*, qu'il lance en 1857, porte éloquentement la marque de l'homme : « *Rendre le peuple meilleur* » annonce l'en-tête tandis que, sous un livre ouvert, il est écrit « *Religion, liberté, science, progrès* ». Sabourin nous convie à découvrir une facette moins connue de la personnalité de Pierre J.-O. Chauveau.